

NEWS:

The Truth About FiTs

FiT rates have been cut, but has a drop in solar panel prices made them just as worthwhile?

Last month, we reported on the Government's reduction in Feed-in Tariff (FiT) payments for new solar PV (photovoltaic) panel installations, from 43.3p/kWh for retrofit and 37.8p/kWh for

new builds, to a new flat rate of 21p/kWh. The cuts, which came into force on 12th December 2011, left the majority of self-builders and renovators who had planned to include solar panels in their forthcoming projects deeply disappointed.

However, solar comparison website CompareMySolar.co.uk claims that during 2011 solar panel prices dropped by 30% (based on over 1,000 quotes for residential installations), and that a 16 panel system of 4kW can now be bought for around £10,000, whereas it would have cost nearly £15,000 at the start of 2011. It also claims that financial return on domestic solar panels can still be over 10% following the price cuts.

Gertjan van der Goot, founder of CompareMySolar, comments: "Our UK price index from over 100 solar installers shows strong price drops in 2011. We expect further drops early in 2012."

EXAMPLE CALCULATION:

Based on a 4kW installation on a home in Exeter with a south-facing roof with no shading, with half the electricity generated used in the house and the other half exported. Financial return is:

4,000kWh x 21p/kWh =
£840 for the Feed-in Tariff

2,000kWh x 15p/kWh =
£300 of electricity savings

2,000kWh x 3p/kWh = **£60 for the Export tariff**

This totals £1,200 in year one, which is well over 10% financial return for a £10,000 system. The total payback time will be around 8-10 years. *CompareMySolar.co.uk*



COURSES:

Old Home, New Tricks

Get to grips with your period property during a weekend away

SPAB's (the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) ever popular weekend Homeowner Course is back again this March.

SPAB's first Homeowner Course of 2012, held between 24th and 25th March, will arm period property owners taking on the repair and renovation of an old home with the knowledge to make their project a success. Designed to suit historic homes of all eras, topics covered include repairing old roofs, damp, where to use lime and how to work with your builder, as well as providing opportunity for homeowners to put their questions to the experts.

The course, held at SPAB's headquarters in Spitalfields, London, costs £160. Call 020 7377 1644 or visit spab.org.uk to find out more or to book a place.